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IN THE CLAIMS

--1. (Amended) A method for producing an ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer, [which method comprises] comprising:

copolymerizing ethylene and vinyl acetate in an a first alcohol-based solvent, so as to form a solution containing said ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer; and

recovering unreacted vinyl acetate from [a] said solution after copolymerizing[,];

wherein [the] said solution is introduced into a recovery column through an upper portion thereof, a vapor of an alcohol-based solvent is introduced into [the] said recovery column through a lower portion thereof, a solution [including an] comprising ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer is taken out of [the] said recovery column through a lower portion thereof, and unreacted vinyl acetate in the solution is taken out of [the] said recovery column with the vapor of the alcohol-based solvent through an upper portion thereof[,];

wherein [an oxygen concentration in the] said alcohol-based solvent is deoxidized in advance and an oxygen concentration in said alcohol-based solvent [to be introduced into the recovery column] is not more than 60 ppm when said alcohol-based solvent is used in recovering said unreacted vinyl acetate.

2. (Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein [the] said oxygen concentration is not more than 30 ppm.

3. (Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein an oxygen concentration in

[the] said alcohol-based solvent for copolymerizing is not more than 15 ppm.

4. (Amended) A method for producing a saponified ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer, [which method comprises] comprising:

copolymerizing ethylene and vinyl acetate in an alcohol-based solvent [thereby] to obtain a solution containing an ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer[,];

recovering unreacted vinyl acetate from [a] said solution after copolymerizing[,]; and

saponifying [the] said ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer[,];

wherein [the] said solution is introduced into a recovery column through an upper portion thereof, a vapor of an alcohol-based solvent is introduced into [the] said recovery column through a lower portion thereof, a solution [including an] comprising said ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer is taken out of the recovery column through a lower portion thereof, and unreacted vinyl acetate in the solution is taken out of [the] said recovery column with the vapor of the alcohol based solvent through an upper portion thereof,

wherein [an oxygen concentration in the] said alcohol-based solvent is deoxidized in advance and an oxygen concentration in said alcohol-based solvent [to be introduced into the recovery column] is not more than 60 ppm when said alcohol-based solvent is used in recovering said unreacted vinyl acetate.

5. (Amended) The method according to claim 4, wherein a saponification degree of [the] said saponified ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer is at least 90 mol %.

6. (Amended) The method according to claim 4, wherein [the] said oxygen concentration is not more than 30 ppm.

7. (Amended) The method according to claim 4, wherein an oxygen

concentration in [the] said alcohol-based solvent for copolymerizing is not more than 15 ppm.--

Claims 8-19. (New)